

# PROTECTING OUR STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS ACT OF 2021

## What They Are Saying...

“Students must never be subjected to corporal punishment or any harsh disciplinary action as these practices have absolutely no place in school. We thank champions Representatives McEachin, Bonamici, and Senator Murphy for recognizing that traumatizing children with physical abuse through corporal punishment ignores the complex issues that arise when children feel threatened, exhibit challenging coping behaviors, or develop clinical disorders. Schools must take a whole child, whole school community approach. With support and training, schools must be transformed to promote learning; allow students to form positive and trusting relationships with trained and knowledgeable adults that are supportive of their complex needs; and, encourage the use of evidence-based strategies to promote positive behavior.”

**Denise Marshall**  
CEO, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

“Ed Trust is proud to support the reintroduction of the Protecting our Students in Schools Act. As students of color return to school buildings after more than a year of COVID-19-related disruption and continued challenges caused by systemic racism, they deserve to enter a school and classroom environment that welcomes, nurtures, and supports them — one that is free of corporal punishment and harm. We applaud Representative McEachin, Representative Bonamici, and Senator Murphy for introducing this important piece of legislation and urge Congress to pass this measure to ensure our students are truly safe in school.”

**Kayla Patrick**  
Senior policy analyst at The Education Trust and co-author of “And They Cared:” How to Create Better, Safer Learning Environments for Girls of Color

“Committee for Children is proud to support the Protecting Our Students Act. Research shows that when children feel safe and supported, they are ready to learn. This cannot happen in a learning environment where the threat of physical harm is used to ensure compliance. Accordingly, educators across the country have been implementing evidence-based alternatives to punitive discipline in service of fostering positive school climate and culture. The Protecting Our Students Act honors those educators’ efforts, prevents harm to students, and considers the research in a way that’s sure to improve learning—and the learning experience—for children across the country.”

**Andrea Lohanhill**  
CEO, Committee for Children

“This bill represents an important step forward in protecting children as well as promoting the best educational environment conducive to learning. The research clearly indicates that ending corporal punishment and establishing school discipline through the use of positive behavioral approaches leads to a better school climate for all as well as improved student performance and success. Passage of this bill will be a major milestone for the recognition of the rights and the pedagogic needs of students.”

**George Holden, Ph.D.**  
President, U.S. Alliance to End the Hitting of Children



“The National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives strongly endorses the Protecting Our Students in School Act, sponsored by Representative McEachin. Decades of research have consistently established the negative impacts of corporal punishment on many aspects of child development; in particular, children’s social, emotional and mental health. Furthermore, it impedes academic performance and increases misconduct in the classroom and at home. These negative consequences of corporal punishment can be longstanding if not lifelong. This Act will eliminate these harmful practices, thereby improving conditions for students to learn, grow and thrive.”

**Diana Fishbein Ph.D.**

**Co-Director of NPSC & Senior Scientist in the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.**

"Given all that we now know about the adverse effects of corporal punishment, and the availability of proven, non-punitive, non-exclusionary disciplinary approaches, it is unconscionable -- and embarrassing -- that corporal punishment is still practiced in schools in 19 American states and administered close to 100,000 times every school year. The fact that this procedure is administered disproportionately to Black and Brown students makes it all the more reprehensible. Lives in the Balance wholeheartedly supports the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act of 2021, and will devote itself to ensuring the bill's passage and ending the state-sanctioned traumatization of our kids."

**Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.**

**Founding Director, Lives in the Balance**

"NIECP supports the end of corporal punishment in schools. More and more schools across the United States have banned this outdated, ineffective and harmful intervention that disproportionately impacts disabled students and students of color."

**Dr. Mel Schneiderman**

**Chair of the Executive Committee of NIECP**

"As the first professional organization to call for an end to school corporal punishment in 1975, the American Psychological Association applauds Representative McEachin for introducing the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act, which recognizes that corporal punishment is an antiquated and ineffective form of discipline that causes undue injury and psychological trauma. Corporal punishment disproportionately impacts students of color and students with disabilities and has no place in our schools. Instead, we should be investing in policies that promote positive and safe school climates, increase school-based services that aim to address students' mental and emotional well-being, and eradicate exclusionary discipline practices."

**Arthur C. Evans Jr., Ph.D.**

**CEO of the American Psychological Association**

"Girls Inc. is in full support of the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act to eliminate corporal punishment in schools. Inflicting physical pain on students is deeply harmful to their physical health, as well as their mental and emotional wellbeing. What's more, these practices are more likely to take a toll on the health of Black girls, given that they are three times more likely to receive corporal punishment than their white peers. This critical legislation helps to ensure that all students are cared for and that schools are a safe and equitable place for them to learn."

**Stephanie J. Hull**

**President & CEO, Girls Inc.**



“Research has shown a correlation between the use of corporal punishment and unintended negative consequences for children such as poor mental health, lower cognitive ability and academic achievement, and higher risk for physical abuse. The practice of corporal punishment is inconsistent with policies on child abuse and on racial, economic, and gender equity. NASSP is pleased to support the Protecting Our Student in Schools Act, and we thank Representatives McEachin, Bonamici, and Senator Murphy for introducing it.”

**Ronn Nozoe**

**CEO, National Association of Secondary School Principals**

“Prevent Child Abuse America commends Congressman McEachin for advancing the Protecting Our Students in School Act of 2021, which will help end the use of physical punishment in public schools for all students. This proposed law will be a valuable resource in the prevention of child abuse and neglect by promoting positive school climates and cultures, including the use of behavioral interventions such as systems of support and trauma-informed care, for every student in the country, regardless of race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Experiencing physical punishment places a child at risk for many behavioral, mental, and physical health problems issues throughout life, and this legislation will be an important tool in realizing our vision of a world where all children grow up happy, healthy, and prepared to succeed and thrive in supportive families and communities.”

**Melissa Merrick**

**President and CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America**

“Our country’s schools should be safe and welcoming environments for all kids, and places where they can learn and grow academically, socially and emotionally. Violence is never appropriate in schools—including as a practice in school discipline. Educators and school staff must be trained in supportive, trauma-informed de-escalation practices to help students recognize challenges and learn from them. This bill proposes a federal ban on corporal punishment in our nation’s public schools, and thanks to Rep. Donald McEachin, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici and Sen. Chris Murphy, we can envision a world where schools help solve problems, teach tolerance and model civil behavior, preparing every student to access the opportunities that can help them thrive.”

**Randi Weingarten**

**President, American Federation of Teachers**

“Schools must be places that foster students’ growth and dignity. Corporal punishment not only inflicts pain and physical injury on students, but also impacts their learning and long-term well-being. This is especially true for Black children and children with disabilities who experience corporal punishment in schools at disproportionate rates. Black girls, specifically, are three times more likely to receive corporal punishment than white girls, even though they are no more likely to misbehave. The Protecting Our Students in Schools Act will provide schools with the resources to create positive learning environments. By eliminating harmful punishment and implementing positive, evidence-based policies, local and state leaders can help students learn and thrive.”

**Fatima Goss Graves**

**President and CEO of the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC)**





“The Minnesota Psychological Association wishes to express its support for the Protecting Our Students In Schools Act of 2021. Psychological science finds that the use of corporal punishment is traumatic, harmful, and ineffective and its use in all schools should be banned nationwide. Use of positive, non-punitive approaches have been found to be effective in managing behavior in schools. All students deserve to learn in a safe and supportive environment without threats of violence.”

### **The Minnesota Psychological Association**

“It is critical that our nation move away from aversive discipline practices in schools and toward positive, research-based interventions designed to support all students. National PTA has long opposed corporal punishment and advocated for policies that promote safe, supportive and inclusive practices in schools for all students. Our association applauds Representatives McEachin and Bonamici and Senator Murphy for reintroducing the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act and for their dedication to the well-being of every child.”

### **Leslie Boggs President of National PTA**

“Research conducted by our organization has clearly demonstrated that corporal punishment of children is associated with increased subsequent aggressive behavior as well as mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Other disciplinary techniques are equally effective at teaching children good behavior and they do not have the negative side effects.”

### **David Finkelhor Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire**

“The National Association of School Psychologists has long opposed the use of corporal punishment in schools and we are pleased to support the introduction of this important legislation. No student should be subjected to physical pain as a way of attempting to correct behavior or as a form of punishment. Corporal punishment is ineffective and can cause long term harm to students. There are many evidence-based positive discipline strategies that are effective alternatives to corporal punishment and create safe and supportive school environments. School psychologists work with teachers, administrators, and other educators to implement such strategies to support student behavior and overall wellness. We look forward to continuing helping schools utilize alternatives to the harmful practice of corporal punishment.”

### **Wendy Price President, National Association of Schools Psychologists**

The Protecting Our Students in Schools Act of 2021 will hold schools accountable to provide a safe learning environment that supports all students without the use of inappropriate physical discipline. Rather than inflicting violence on students as a discipline practice, this bill shifts the focus to healing and investments in positive behavioral interventions.”

### **Curt Decker Executive Director, National Disability Rights Network**



“Research shows that corporal punishment is not only ineffective, but also physically, emotionally, and academically harmful. The data also show that Black and Brown students are more likely than their white peers to receive corporal punishment for the same infractions. It is long past time to eliminate corporal punishment in our schools. It has no place there. The Protecting Our Students in Schools Act of 2021 would not only help end this harmful practice, it would also support positive, proactive, and inclusive measures to address student discipline.”

### **Southern Education Foundation**

“The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) is proud to endorse the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act of 2021, which would prohibit the use of corporal punishment in our nation’s schools. As an organization dedicated to the elimination of violence, we know that using painful and degrading force to harm or punish another person is never acceptable and can create traumatic, lifelong impacts. Research has also shown that corporal punishment is disproportionately used against students of color and students with disabilities. Every person deserves to feel safe and respected in the environments where they live, learn, work, or play, and students are no exception. NNEDV urges Congress to pass the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act of 2021 without delay.”

### **Deborah J. Vagins**

#### **President and CEO, National Network to End Domestic Violence**

“In this day and age, it’s disgraceful that LGBTQ+ youth, especially BIPOC LGBTQ+ youth, are still being subjected to archaic corporal punishment and other punitive disciplinary measures at disproportionate rates. GLSEN is proud to endorse this bill as a crucial step in helping state and local education agencies develop the restorative interventions they need to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and keep all students safe from fear and harm. We applaud Congressman A. Donald McEachin (VA-04), Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01), and Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) for reintroducing this legislation and demand an end to this unacceptable practice in every school.”

### **Melanie Willingham-Jaggers (she/they)**

#### **GLSEN Interim Executive Director**

“Corporal punishment has no place in our schools and it is long overdue to finally protect students and end this harmful practice. All students deserve to learn in safe, healthy, and inclusive environments. There is never a justification for physically abusing children. The enduring fact that children of color and children with disabilities are subject more often to this violence than their peers only raises the urgency of this bill’s passage.”

### **Wade Henderson,**

#### **Interim president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**

